

# **ALL LIVES MATTER**

*White Reaction In Austin, TX*



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**THIS WAS INEVITABLE.** MOVEMENTS OF BLACK PEOPLE in this country have always been accompanied by an intense backlash of those who benefit from black oppression. Beginning in late spring 2015 we have seen the rise of a number of diverse right-wing formations: Alex Jones rallying his acolytes, renewed Ku Klux Klan activity, a nazi punk stabbing at a metal show, neo-confederates rallying against the removal of monuments of “southern heritage”, and a mass pro-police pushback called, of all things, “Police Lives Matter”.

The cycle of the post-Ferguson movement in Austin has been relatively tame. We never blocked a highway, no window has been broken, nor any store looted or burned. Those in the leadership of several post-Ferguson organizations have tended more and more to encourage cooperation with politicians and police.

The highest profile act of vandalism was the word “CHUMP” written in chalk on the base of a statue of Jefferson Davis. This, happening at the University of Texas, sparked a campus wide movement to “BUMP THE CHUMP”. The axiom alone propelled a satirical Student Government Campaign to the highest offices.

All this is to say that with very few exceptions the far right has avoided the local manifestations of the post-Ferguson movement to do battle with a national narrative.

## **PROLOGUE:**

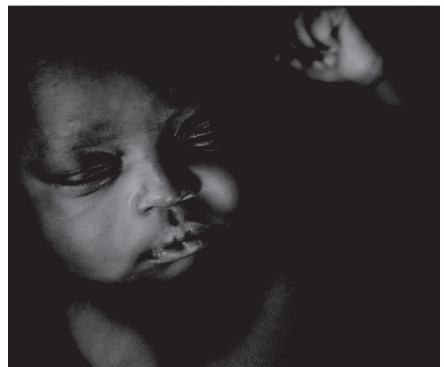
### **ALEX JONES - “BLACK LIVES MATTER”**

The reaction’s earliest manifestation was quite strange. In May, local conspiracist radio and internet star Alex Jones hosted a “Black Lives Matter” protest at a Planned Parenthood clinic in South Austin. Evil genius that he is, he used quotes from PP founder Margaret Sanger’s participation in the American Eugenics movement to deliver the message that Planned Parenthood is the largest killer of Black lives in the nation.

Though Jones uses an anti-eugenicist platform to critique the conspiratorial cabal of “globalists”, his anti-eugenicism goes only so far as to seek to curtail the claims to bodily and reproductive autonomy of women and queers, namely access to abortion. On the other hand, Austin organization Mamas of Color Rising critiques Planned Parenthood’s birth in the eugenics movement and eugenicist management from the womb, to the hospital, to the school, to the prison and is based on expanding autonomy for women and queers. Jones cynically uses this politic to forge alliances

**THE REAL WAR ON  
BLACKS IS ABORTION.**  
INFOWARS.COM

**#BLACKLIVESMATTER**



with the Black right wing and to get one over on “Black Lives Matter”, hoping to goad the movement into a confrontation.

A confrontation he got. Local militants from Red Guards Austin, a Maoist organization, went to the demo initially to escort women to the clinic past Jones’ almost entirely white male demonstrators. They found that Planned Parenthood had made other accommodations and moved quickly to disrupt the rally so that banners and placards could not be seen by on coming traffic. When Alex Jones arrived at the rally he was accosted and his microphone was taken from him, temporarily silencing his live broadcast.

Unfortunately, as this happened, Red Guards members were being identified via social media and, as they left the scene, a license plate number was captured. Via reverse lookup the Red Guards’ driver was identified and her personal information was released on Jones’ Infowars website. She had to move out of her house, delete her social media accounts, lie to her bosses that she was not a communist and deal with weeks of harassment via phone. In addition, non RGA members had their photos splashed on a post melee video produced by Infowars staff, though nothing came of this.

## **DYLANN ROOF: SIGNAL OF WHITE REACTION**

On June 17th, Dylann Roof, a white 21 year old from Columbia, South Carolina shot and killed 9 black members of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal in Charleston, SC. Photos emerged of Roof wearing a jacket with patches of the Rhodesian and Apartheid-era South African emblems and waving a Confederate Flag. According to a friend, he had been particularly set off by the Baltimore Uprising and had ranted to the friend about that and the case of Trayvon Martin. A manifesto attributed to Roof was found online which explains his radicalization by the Trayvon Martin case and his belief that George Zimmerman had been railroaded.

Though Roof’s actions took place in a different Southern State, I believe his call for a “civil war” and his professed disappointment in the far-right’s ability to organize outside of the internet set the stage for Austin. In the aftermath of his attack, what appeared to be a wave of arsons of Black churches rolled across the South, and Klan flyers began to appear in a number of southern cities. His act of terror was a spectacular act that called for the far-right to get to work.

## DEATH TO THE KLAN, FREE THE LAND!

In late July, a call was posted by the Texas KKK on the white supremacist website Stormfront for a Ku Klux Klan organizing picnic outside of Austin. Local antifascists were alerted to this posting and several attempted to contact the organization to unearth more details with no luck. The date of the picnic, August 1st, came and went with no incident.

On September 8th, however, residents in South Austin woke to find Klan literature on their doorsteps. Some called local TV stations who contacted the national headquarters of the KKK at a number given on the flyer. Though it was never reported how many flyers had been distributed, the national spokesman said they encouraged members to flyer with no less than 500 so that they might find one or two people interested in joining. He also said it was part of a statewide recruitment effort. Though the Anti-Defamation League called it a cheap ploy for attention, residents declined to appear on camera for fear of being targeted.



The Klan is no stranger to Austin. In 2001, two Williamson County Sheriffs were fired after their membership became known. In 1983, the Texas KKK held a march on the capitol as a part of a nationwide drive for recruitment. A pamphlet, published by the Austin branch of the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee, details more about their organizing drive: appearances on the media, at a local high school, and at Austin Community College; the purchase of land in Travis County for para-military training; and a cross burning in Bastrop, TX outside of Austin.

The march in Austin was met with broad resistance. A petition drive was organized to persuade the city council to deny the Klan a permit. When this was granted by the city, community organizations (the Brown Berets, the Black Citizens Task Force and the John Brown

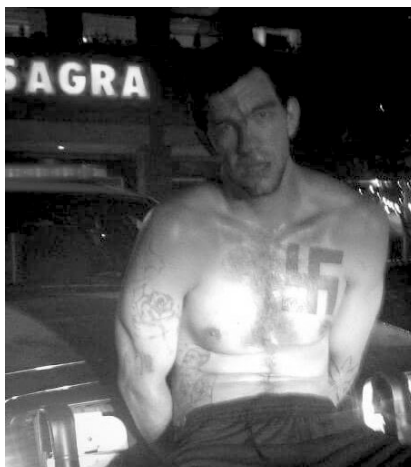


Anti-Klan Committee) held a counter demonstration. After the counter demonstration, footage was released of Brown Beret Paul Hernandez being beaten by APD officers in an alleyway.

## NAZI PUNKS FUCK OFF

In addition to increased Klan propaganda, more homegrown white supremacist flyers have been appearing in Austin's historically segregated POC neighborhoods east of Interstate 35. Produced by an unnamed group, these flyers claimed "White Lives Matter!"

These appeared shortly before a man with a massive swastika tattoo on his chest assaulted several people in a club in gentrifying East Austin with a knife. He was approached after removing his shirt to display the tattoo, a fight ensued, and he took a bottle over the head as he stabbed four people.



While the confrontation and resistance by other concertgoers is notable, the punk and metal music scene in Austin and nationally has been slowly welcoming white supremacist musicians, from National Socialist Black Metal to Neo-folk bands like Death In June.

One anarchist concert promoter booked Death In June to play the now defunct venue Infest. After the promoter was alerted that there was a national boycott and that anarchists and Antifa in the Bay Area were planning actions to disrupt the show, he held the line that he was a committed anti-racist and that "anarchists" had told him that they were fine with the show. He claimed that explicit white supremacist statements made by the musician were part of the "art" and that the Nazi aesthetic was only that.

The show continued without incident other than long Facebook threads and eventual "un-friending," but this event demonstrates that even committed "anti-racists" are responsible for creating an environment friendly to fascists. The punk and metal scenes are notoriously white and masculinist, and internal fights against racism among other toxic elements are still necessary.





## **WE ARE THE CONFEDERATE RIDERS OF AMERICA! WE CONDEMN THE KLAN!**

On February 27th, University of Texas students awoke to graffiti on a statue of Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Housed on the South Mall, the statue had been the subject of years of debate along with the campus' Civil War monuments. Several years before, student pressure led to the change of the name of Simkins Dorm, named after a Klansman. The statues on the mall had been installed in the 1930's as part of a plan to memorialize the Confederacy by the wealthy UT patron George Littlefield.

The graffiti said "CHUMP" in blue chalk with a little arrow pointing up from the base. It apparently touched a nerve, and the University forums lit up. Over the next six months, the debate raged, flaring up in intensity as Dylann Roof's use of the Confederate flag sparked a national movement to remove the many memorials to the Confederacy. The statue was vandalized again in late June and was finally removed after a lengthy process on August 30th.

The informal and formal forum process at UT revealed the extent of the public's attachment to "southern heritage" (called "white heritage" by the Klan) and the belief that it is under attack. Neo-confederate flag-wavers showed up at the removal ceremony but confrontation was not reported.

Less than a week later a Confederate Flag Ride event page was discovered on Facebook, organized by the Confederate Riders of America. A response was hastily arranged. A loose anti-fascist crew gathered to greet the Riders' arrival at the state Capitol. They were several hours past their advertised time as they were assembling several legs of a state wide ride. They displayed their flags, US and Confederate, off of their trucks and bikes as they picked up riders from small towns and metroplexes. They were meant to meet at one of the two Confederate memorials at the Capitol.

When they finally arrived, they only slightly outnumbered the anti-fascist crew, perhaps three for every two. The crew blocked their entrance and some got into a very earnest debate over the content of "southern heritage" and the meaning of the flag. The Riders were very averse to being understood and cast as racists, one stating that they "Condemn the Klan!". Nevertheless, the Antifa continued to block their advance, having to scatter and reconvene at chokepoints as the neo-Confederates broke through the lines.

When they all made it through, Antifa surrounded their march chanting anti-confederate slogans. This led to a grand scuffle over the flags on the front entrance to the Capitol. Their literature was dumped, grabbed, and destroyed by Antifa before the cops showed up and order was restored.

The day that this writing was to be finished, it was discovered that several of the Antifa had been identified and doxxed by the Confederate Riders of Bexar County, Texas and Pioneer Little Europe, a nakedly White Nationalist Facebook page. The PLE went on to target several pages for Black Lives Matter Austin events, encouraging their allies to show up and disrupt them in person.

## **POLICE LIVES MATTER ALL LIVES MATTER LIVES MATTER**

Following the recent shooting of Deputy Darren Goforth at a suburban Houston, TX gas station a larger more terrifying phenomenon has begun. Using the banner #PoliceLivesMatter and a number of awful puns on Goforth's name (Goforth With No Hate!), the police from the rank and file, to the unions, to the brass have rallied to push back against the "anti-police movement".

In addition to those engaged in law enforcement, they have brought in a broad section of community support, which appears as a mass movement. This is unlike the reaction of the NYPD police unions which, in the aftermath of criticism by Mayor Bill DeBlasio and the



assassination of two NYPD officers, reacted in what had the form of a labor dispute. Police stopped writing tickets and making arrests for minor violations in order to prove how much they were needed to the city and many turned their backs on DeBlasio at a major speech. While they likely had mass support for this from a conservative base, they did not turn this support into a mass movement.

In Texas, however, the reaction to Goforth's shooting has attracted mass momentum, at least for now. A Police Lives Matter rally on September 12th in Houston had over 18,000 RSVPs and one scheduled for the 19th in Austin has over 3,000. The Lieutenant Governor of Texas called for citizens to call officers "Sir" and "Ma'am" and to buy them lunch to show that they are appreciated. At the Police Lives Matter March in Houston, one of the speakers said that this was necessary to boost morale as it has become difficult to recruit new officers in this period and that current ones are quitting.

Both the Houston and Austin marches use the death of Goforth to go after the post-Ferguson Movement at large. They have adapted the slogan "Black Lives Matter" to "Police Lives Matter", then to its "post-racial" stand-in "All Lives Matter", and further to its ultimate reduction to simply, "Lives Matter". The event call outs position them against the "anti-police" "criminal" movement and state that they will not be rioting (against whom?). They call for the rise of a "silent majority" in a turn reminiscent of the right wing movement against the gains of 50's and 60's Black struggle.

This is encapsulated in the Republican Party's white supremacist Southern Strategy, which, in hopes of drawing in disaffected southern white Democrats and maintaining its northern moderate base, dropped explicit racial language from the conservative electoral playbook in favor of implicit coded language, i.e. "silent majority". Richard Nixon's advisor, H.R. Haldeman, noted that Nixon "emphasized that you have to face the fact that the whole problem is really the blacks. The key is to devise a system that recognized this while not appearing to."

Though Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo said that he would address the language used on the Austin PLM event page, he has instead decided to address the assembled crowd and has met with the organizers of PLM Austin and moderators of the Black Lives Matter Austin Facebook page to ensure a peaceful rally.

The organizer of the Austin PLM march, Williamson County Constable Robert Chody went so far as to block people who had RSVP'd to the counter demonstrations from viewing the PLM event page, drawing a very clear line. He has been very diligent about drawing rank and

file and union endorsements from local PD's across Central TX. The event page also states that "anti-police" elements are not invited.

Robert Chody has his own past of racial aggression. While he was an Austin police officer, the city settled a brutality case in which he was charged. He placed a 15 year old Black high school student in a Full Nelson chokehold and slammed his head into a squad car. This put the boy into a seizure, and Chody accused him of faking. As the boy's mother tried to intervene she was thrown to the ground by Chody's partner. After the city settled the lawsuit, he won 85 million dollars in the Texas Lottery, quit APD and ran for Williamson County Constable.

According to Houston news station KTRK, only about 4,000 attended the Police Lives Matter march in Houston, only about twenty percent of the projected turnout. While considerably smaller than expected, the massive response to this and the coming Austin rally presents a bellweather of the extreme polarization of the moment. While Police Chief Acevedo may hope to paper over this with his recent declarations, the lines are clearly drawn.

## **"THIS COULD BE THE START OF SOMETHING AMAZING"**

Another Austin police officer, Taber White, posted a long statement on the Austin PLM Facebook page accusing the media of sensationalizing justified uses of force. White also desires "something amazing" to grow out of Police Lives Matter.

Taber White helps to organize the Department of Justice funded Restore Rundberg redevelopment project which aims to increase broken windows policing in the working class Rundberg neighborhood on the edge of creeping gentrification.

The Restore Rundberg project presents itself as community driven, a collaboration between the UT School of Social Work, neighborhood activists, and of course, the Austin Police Department. With little autonomous organizing in the area, the police present themselves as the answer to this problem neighborhood. Once they drive out the most poor and disenfranchised by targeting drug dealers, sex workers, and the homeless the area will finally be safe for community oriented development.

White and another officer recently appeared on a panel with other Rundberg community organizers promoting Restore Rundberg at a

screening of “BLACKOUT”, a documentary on Black flight from Austin. A Black organizer in the crowd asked, “When have the police ever been Black people’s friends?” White, white, answered that his experiences growing up the son of a racist father inspired his decision to pursue relations with other races through the community liaison office of APD.

In other words White, is an anti-racist police officer facilitating the harassment and removal of “criminal” elements from the Rundberg neighborhood. This is with the consent of activists and “desirable” elements.

With friends like these, who needs enemies?

## CONCLUSION: COPS AND KLAN HAND IN HAND

White supremacist formations in the US take on many diverse forms, yet all have drawn their fervor from the same source: the movement of Black people for liberation and survival.

In the current context they take advantage of the grey area created by the Southern Strategy and “post-racial” politics. The punk and metal counter-cultural movements have been used as recruiting and proving grounds for white-supremacists and fascists for as long as they have existed. The Police Lives Matter movement, if it takes off, could be used in the same way.

Taber White is aware of the milieu in which they operate, advocating an extreme awareness of what slogans are raised and what presentation is made to the media and public. Chody, the Police Lives Matter organizer, has stated that he will remove “racial” comments from the page and White asks for a “clear message for what this movement isn’t.”

Presumably, the movement does support the judicial use of state violence, deployed in a “colorblind” manner, only incidentally brutalizing, killing, and imprisoning inordinate numbers of Black people. The movement does not support the extra-judicial brutalizing, killing, and terrorizing of Black people.

Middling elements within the (white) right use internal differences to convince the (largely white) public that they are not the enemy. The same police that arrest and incarcerate masses of Black people ask us to go to them for protection from the Klan.

In an age of anti-racist police officers and anti-klan neo-confederates the need to draw a line is more important than ever. In this essay I have drawn a line from the most isolated extremists to the most mass of movements. I hope this enables our groupings and movements to recognize our enemies and elaborate their connections and contradictions to our friends.

— Scott Hoft  
Austin, Texas  
Fall 2015







*This was inevitable. Movements of Black people in this country have always been accompanied by an intense backlash from those who benefit from Black oppression.*